

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Testimony of Ryan Lynch, policy director
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Joint Committee on Transportation

February 22, 2012

My name is Ryan Lynch, and I am the policy director for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit organization working for a more balanced transportation network in Connecticut, downstate New York and New Jersey.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here today in support of Raised Bill 111, *AN ACT CREATING PENALTIES FOR CAUSING HARM TO A VULNERABLE USER OF A PUBLIC WAY*. This bill has been endorsed by Connecticut's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board, as well as over 20 other advocacy groups and individuals throughout the state. The bill would identify vulnerable users of the State's public ways, users that include pedestrians, highway workers, cyclists, a person driving or riding an animal, a person using a skateboard, roller skates or inline skates, or a person operating or riding on an agricultural tractor or farm implement.

The legislation would create penalties for a person convicted of inflicting serious physical injury or death to a vulnerable user. These offenders will be required to attend a motor vehicle operator's retraining program, perform community service and be eligible for a fine that would not exceed \$5,000. The legislation does not absolve vulnerable users from using the road responsibly, but rather penalizes motorists who do not.

While the penalties outlined in the current legislation are less stringent than those outlined in other enacted vulnerable user legislation, the measure is a good step towards driver accountability. The legislation will importantly increase awareness among drivers regarding other users of the State's roadway infrastructure and will also encourage drivers to view driving as a privilege to be taken seriously.

If enacted, RB 111 would tap into a growing, nationwide, movement to hold careless drivers more accountable for their actions. Similar legislation has been adopted in Oregon, Illinois, Delaware and neighboring New York.

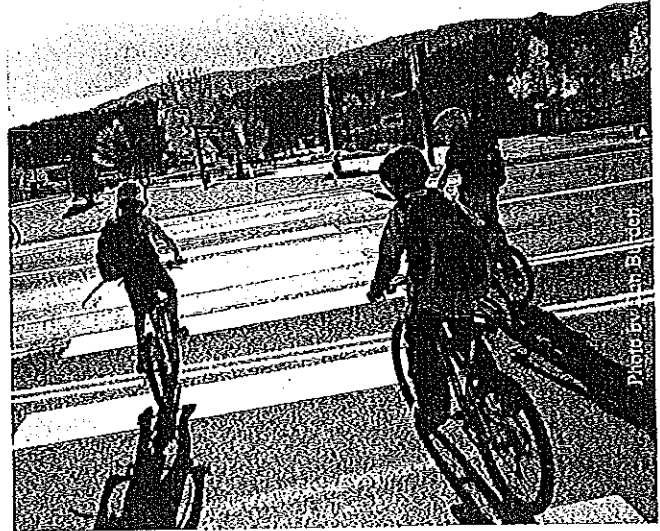
These efforts are needed because far too long, careless drivers have injured and killed vulnerable users of the nation's public ways, often without punishment.

SUPPORT THE PROTECTION OF ALL USERS OF CONNECTICUT'S ROADS

Support RB 111: AN ACT CREATING PENALTIES FOR CAUSING HARM TO A VULNERABLE USER OF A PUBLIC WAY

Purpose:

Connecticut has made great strides towards creating safer environments for all users of the State's roadways. The 2009 enactment of Complete Streets legislation, which requires road projects to incorporate infrastructure for all users of the road, will put Connecticut on a more sustainable transportation path in the years to come. Unfortunately, Connecticut's roads are still hostile to non-motorized users because of a dearth of enforcement when drivers are careless.



Needs:

Careless drivers injure thousands of vulnerable users every year in the United States. In Connecticut alone, 135 pedestrians and cyclists were killed from 2008 to 2010 and injuries to pedestrians and cyclists average approximately 1,500 a year. Unless there is evidence of drug or alcohol use, or a hit and run, these drivers are rarely held accountable for their potentially devastating, and preventable, actions.

Bill Overview:

The vulnerable user bill consists of several components, none of which require any additional revenue from the State for enactment. The bill would:

- Establish a class of vulnerable users of a public way.
- Define vulnerable users of a public way as pedestrians, highway workers, a person using a wheelchair or motorized chair, persons riding or driving an animal, persons operating farm tractors (or implements of husbandry without enclosed shells), bicycles, scooters, roller or inline skates, and skateboards.
- Establish penalties for infliction of serious physical injury or death to a vulnerable user when a person fails to operate due care when using a motor vehicle. The penalties include:
 - A motor vehicle operator's retraining program and;
 - Performance of community service and;
 - A fine of not more than five thousand dollars.

Bill Myth:

While the vulnerable user bill increases fines and penalties for those that operate motor vehicles carelessly, it does not absolve vulnerable users from safely utilizing roadway infrastructure.

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www.tstc.org

Supporters of Safer Public Ways:

Bike and Pedestrian Alliance of Clinton
Debbie Lundgren

Bike Walk Connecticut
MaryEllen Thibodeau, President

Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board
Neil Pade, Chair

Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club
Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Connecticut Citizens Transportation Lobby
Jill Kelly and Carol Leightins, Co-Chairs

Connecticut Fund for the Environment
Roger Reynolds, Senior Attorney

Connecticut Horse Council
Amy Stegall, President

Connecticut League of Conservation Voters
Lori Brown, Executive Director

Connecticut Livable Streets Campaign
Mark Abraham

Elm City Cycling
William Kurtz, Board of Directors

Farmington Valley Trails Council, Inc.
Bruce Donald, President

Greenwich Safe Cycling
Vince DiMarco, Chairman

*Rail*Trains*Ecology*Cycling*
Richard Stowe

Regional Plan Association
David Kooris, Vice President

Shoreline Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition
Kathy Connolly

Simsbury Bike Walk Advisory Committee
Ann Marie Potter, Member

Sound Cyclists Bicycle Club
Pam Girard, Community Relations Representative

Transit for Connecticut
Karen Burnaska, Coordinator

Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Ryan Lynch, Policy Director

1000 Friends of Connecticut
Nichole Strack, Executive Director

Former State Representative
Thomas Kehoe

Ward Chair, 96th District
David Streever